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UNCLAS BOGOTA 003479

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

DEPT FOR INL/LP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SNAR CO

SUBJECT: DC-3 Accident March 28, No Injuries

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: A Colombian National Police (PNC) DC-3 aircraft (tail number PNC 0214) crashed upon landing in Caruru, Vaupes Department, on March 28. No injuries or fatalities resulted, but an initial inspection has concluded that it is not economically feasible to repair the aircraft. PNC and NAS safety experts are conducting a bilateral accident investigation. Initial indications suggest that the accident may have been the result of pilot error. NAS will conduct a thorough review of DC-3 pilot training with the PNC. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (SBU) On March 28, 2004, at 1:15 p.m. a DC-3 (PNC tail number 0214), during an approach at Caruru (one of the towns in Vaupes Department where a police presence was re-established only two months ago) lost control and subsequently crashed. The crew of four sustained no injuries as a result of the accident. A preliminary aircraft damage report by NAS sub-contractor maintenance personnel has concluded that the aircraft is beyond economical repair. An on-site investigation was conducted by PNC safety personnel and the NAS Senior Aviation and Aviation Safety Advisers. A subsequent bilateral accident investigation will be conducted by PNC and NAS safety personnel.

¶13. (SBU) On March 28, 2004, a PNC aircrrew of four, including the pilot, Captain Monsalve (with 546 flight hours as a DC-3 command pilot and 1235 hours as a DC-3 co-pilot), departed El Dorado Police Base in Bogota at 5:30 a.m. on a general support mission with multiple stopovers. The route of flight was Bogota - San Jose de Guaviare - Mitu - San Jose - Caruru. The crew departed San Jose with 4500 lbs of fuel and 3000 lbs of cargo to Caruru. The aircraft landed with 3500 lbs of fuel. Caruru is located 124 nautical miles on a 145 degree heading from San Jose. The runway at Caruru is an unimproved dirt strip approximately 4000 feet in length. The runway conditions, at the time of the accident were reported to be wet from recent rains however suitable for landing and takeoffs (another DC-3 landed and took-off from Caruru's runway less than an hour before PNC-0214 landed). The reported weather conditions were 6000 feet visibility, with a 1300 feet overcast ceiling. A flight plan and risk assessment were completed prior to the mission by the PNC which resulted in a risk level of medium.

¶14. (SBU) The pilot (Monsalve) reported to NAS safety adviser that during landing everything appeared normal on touchdown of the main wheels and that the runway was wet, but he had no problem initially controlling the aircraft. Monsalve stated that after the tail wheel touched down the aircraft began to veer to the left and that he could no longer control the aircraft. He added that he was concerned that he would crash into the small houses next to the runway so he decided to apply power and bring the tailwheel up and thus try to control the direction of the airplane. He successfully brought the nose of the aircraft back towards the runway and then decided to apply full power to do a go-around. Monsalve noted that he could only get 40 percent power and that he could not get the plane to fly. The aircraft subsequently veered to the left off the runway, hit a small palm tree with the left wing, hopped over a small road, and finally came to rest near the bank of a river, but 175 feet from the water.

¶15. (SBU) The aircrrew was transported to Bogota March 29 for toxicology tests and interviews. All aircraft maintenance records, flight training records, risk assessments, flight plan, and information concerning the mission have been secured for the accident investigation.

¶16. (SBU) Insofar as this is the second accident of a DC-3 in less than one year, resulting in the loss of two DC-3s, NAS will conduct a thorough review of DC-3 pilot and crew training with the PNC with an eye toward ensuring full adherence to all safety and training requirements, as well as spot inspections of pilots and co-pilots during flights.

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